

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By



SOURCES



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Important News Articles

1. Lok Sabha passes Bills for women's quota in J&K, Puducherry - The Hindu/ LS clears 2 Bills extending women's quota to Puducherry, J-K assemblies - Indian Express
2. Rajya Sabha passes Bill for appointment of CEC, ECs - The Hindu/ Opposition slams CEC Bill: Against Constitution, SC judgment, EC freedom - Indian Express
3. Kerala elderly rely on MGNREGS, younger workers opt for higher paying labour: Data - Indian Express
4. 74% Indians could not afford healthy diet in 2021: report - The Hindu
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Important News Articles

GS II

1. Lok Sabha passes Bills for women's quota in J&K, Puducherry - The Hindu/ LS clears 2 Bills extending women's quota to Puducherry, J-K assemblies - Indian Express

Relevance: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

News:

- The Lok Sabha approved two bills to **extend the 33% reservation for women in Parliament and State legislatures**
 - as per the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act.

Prelims Takeaway

- Article 370

Key Point

- The focus was on Union Territories Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir.
- However, the discussion was dominated by the **recent Supreme Court verdict on the abrogation of Article 370.**

Object and Reasons

- The Bills aim to implement **similar provisions for women's reservation in 2 union territory**
 - **The Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir** by amending the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019
 - And the Legislative Assembly of Puducherry by amending the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.

Implementation Timeline

- The implementation of the **women's reservation law is contingent** on the next census (likely late 2024)
 - subsequent delimitation exercises in 2026 for redrawing Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies.
- The quota for women in the **Lok Sabha and Assemblies will continue for 15 years**, with the possibility of extension by Parliament

2. Rajya Sabha passes Bill for appointment of CEC, ECs - The Hindu/ Opposition slams CEC Bill: Against Constitution, SC judgment, EC freedom - Indian Express

Relevance: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

News:

- Recently the Rajya Sabha approved the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill**
- It marked a significant legislative development in guiding the **appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (EC).**

Prelims Takeaway

- Election Commission

Key Provisions

- The Bill introduces a **clause related to the appointment process**, which was absent in the 1991 Act.

- A **search and selection committee** will now oversee the appointment of the CEC and ECs, replacing the government's unilateral decision-making.
- **Legal protection for CEC and ECs against legal proceedings** related to their duties is incorporated into the legislation.

Amendments and Parity

- The Centre **introduced two official amendments**, aligning the protocol, salaries, and emoluments of the CEC and ECs with those of Supreme Court judges.
- Critics expressed concerns about **bias and asserting that the process was arbitrary, malicious**, and would lead to disastrous consequences.
- The need for **transparency**, as previous appointments lacked a legal framework.

3. Kerala elderly rely on MGNREGS, younger workers opt for higher paying labour: Data - Indian Express

Relevance: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News:

Prelims Takeaway

- MGNREGA

- **Kerala's high daily wages for unskilled workers are influencing** the age distribution of participants in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- The state stands out with a significant percentage of **elderly workers engaged in the program**.

Key Points

- Age Distribution in MGNREGS:
- In Kerala, 28.47% of MGNREGA workers this fiscal year fall in the **age group of 61-80**, while only 1.41% are in the 18-30 age group.
- Nationally, the average for workers above 61 is 12.1%, and **for those under 30, it is 12.02%**.

Wage Discrepancy and Worker Preferences

- The primary deterrent for younger workers in Kerala is the **higher wages offered in the state's unskilled labour market**.
- **Kerala pays the highest daily wages to agricultural laborers**, as per RBI data, at Rs 764, more than double the national average of Rs 345.
- **Unskilled laborers in some Kerala areas** reportedly earn around Rs 900 per day, further dissuading them from opting for MGNREGS, where the daily wage is Rs 330.

State-wise Comparison

- Telangana follows Kerala, with **23.63% of MGNREGS workers aged above 61** this fiscal year.
- Tamil Nadu **ranks third with 18.22%**.

Gender Dynamics

- In Kerala, **women constitute 88% of the MGNREGS workforce**, exceeding the national average of 55%.
- The **Kudumbashree Mission**, a women empowerment program, contributes significantly to the state's female workforce.

Elderly Participation and Dignity

- The Elderly in India Report 2021 notes that **16.5% of Kerala's population consists of senior citizens**.
- Many elderly individuals find dignity in earning under **MGNREGS, aiming for financial independence and security**.

Impact on Work Quality

- The prevalence of **elderly workers** has affected the **quality of work under MGNREGA**, with challenges in obtaining specific output and increased man days for certain tasks.
- Skill upgradation among elderly workers is **identified as a challenge**.

4. 74% Indians could not afford healthy diet in 2021: report - The Hindu

Relevance: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

News:

- **The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** of the United Nations released its Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023
- It reveals **critical statistics and trends in South Asia**.
- The report emphasised challenges in meeting **Sustainable Development Goals and global nutrition targets**.

Prelims Takeaway

- The Food and Agriculture Organisation

Key Points

Affordability of Healthy Diet

- In 2021, **74.1% of Indians** couldn't afford a healthy diet, a slight improvement from 76.2% in 2020.
- **Pakistan recorded 82.2%**, and Bangladesh faced difficulties with 66.1% of the population unable to access healthy food.

Impact of Rising Food Costs

- The report warned that if **food costs rise without a corresponding increase in income**, more people will struggle to afford a healthy diet.
- The compounding effect of **rising food costs and falling incomes exacerbates the challenge**.

Pandemic and 5Fs Crisis

- The report highlighted the **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the "5Fs" crisis** (Food, Feed, Fuel, Fertilisers, and Finance) on the region, causing prolonged effects.
- The Asia-Pacific region still represents **half of the global undernourished population**, with severe food insecurity persisting.

Nutritional Challenges in South Asia

- The region has 370.7 million undernourished people, **accounting for half of the global total**.
- **Stunting affects 31.7% of children under five in India**, while wasting (low weight for height) is highest in the region at 18.7%.
- India's prevalence of childhood **overweight is 2.8%**, and **53% of women aged 15 to 49 suffer from anaemia**.
- **1.6%** of adults in India are **obese**.

Breastfeeding and Low Birthweight

- India has made progress in **exclusive breastfeeding, with a prevalence of 63.7%** among infants 0–5 months, higher than the global average of 47.7%.
- India has the **highest prevalence of low birthweight** in the region at 27.4%.

5. Trade deal with Oman could boost India's economic ties with West Asia, says GTRI - Indian Express

Relevance: effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

News:

- **India and Oman** are rapidly advancing negotiations for a **comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, with officials from the Department of Commerce currently engaged in talks in Muscat.
- **The department has set an internal deadline** to finalise the deal by the end of the month.

Prelims Takeaway

- Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

Background

- **India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** have faced challenges initiating negotiations for over a year
 - primarily due to differences in terms of reference, notably with Saudi Arabia.
- Oman, if the **FTA is successful, would be the second GCC** member after the UAE to sign such an agreement with India.

Significance

- The proposed **FTA is expected to enhance economic** ties between India and West Asia.
- **Bilateral trade between India and Oman** has been robust, growing from \$3.15 billion in FY22 to \$4.48 billion in FY23, marking a 42% year-on-year increase.

Previous Agreements

- India and the UAE signed a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** in February 2022.
- **The India-UAE agreement** is seen as a model for the potential India-Oman FTA.

Trade Dynamics

- Over 80% of India's goods enter **Oman facing an average 5% import duty, with limited trade barriers.**
- **The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI)** suggests that the FTA could lead to a significant increase in Indian exports to Oman by eliminating duties on major products

GTRI Report Insights

- **GTRI highlighted that 83.5%** of India's goods exports to Oman face a 5% import duty.
- The FTA is expected to eliminate this duty on products like **motor gasoline, iron and steel, electronics, machinery, and textiles.**
- About **16.5% of India's exports to Oman are already duty-free** and will not see additional benefits from the FTA.

Strategic and Economic Impact

- The **India-Oman CEPA is not only anticipated to offer economic benefits** through import duty reductions but also holds strategic significance for India's foreign policy.
- The agreement is seen as a **potential gateway for India to foster economic and strategic ties in the Middle East**, a region of critical importance.

6. POMPE DISEASE - Indian Express

Relevance: Health

News:

- Recently, **India's first Pompe disease patient, passed away** at the age of 24 after a prolonged battle with the disease.
- Her father founded the **Organisation for Rare Diseases India (ORDI)** in 2010, the **first NGO in India dedicated to rare diseases.**

Prelims Takeaway

- Pompe Disease
- National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021

Pompe Disease

- Also known as **Glycogen Storage Disease Type II**, it is a **rare genetic disorder** resulting from a **deficiency of the enzyme acid alpha-glucosidase (GAA).**
- The enzyme is essential for **breaking down glycogen into glucose within cell lysosomes.**
- Prevalence estimates range from **1 in 40,000 to 1 in 300,000 births**, occurring across diverse ethnicities.

Impact on Individuals

- The **severity and onset of Pompe disease symptoms vary**, leading to a spectrum of clinical presentations.
- **Key symptoms** include **progressive muscle weakness affecting mobility**, motor skill delays in children, degenerative impacts on bones, respiratory complications etc.

Diagnosis

- Diagnosing Pompe disease involves a **multi-faceted approach.**
- **Enzyme assays** are conducted to **measure the activity of acid alpha-glucosidase (GAA)**, the deficient enzyme.

- **Genetic testing identifies mutations** in the responsible GAA gene.
- **Clinical evaluations** consider the **patient's symptoms and medical history**.
- **Enzyme tests** on blood or skin cells, along with **genetic analysis, help accurately identify and confirm the disease**, facilitating timely intervention.

Treatment

- Although there is **no cure** for Pompe disease, **Enzyme Replacement Therapy (ERT)** is a standard treatment.
- This involves **infusing the missing enzyme to alleviate glycogen buildup**, aiming to manage symptoms and improve the patient's quality of life.

7. Game-changer - The Hindu

Relevance: Health**News:**

- The US FDA recently **granted approval for two gene therapies, Casgevy and Lyfgenia, to treat sickle cell disease in patients aged 12 and above**.
- The therapies represent a groundbreaking **application of CRISPR-Cas9** for diseases traditionally treatable only through **bone marrow transplantation**.

Mechanisms of Gene Therapies

- Lyfgenia employs a **disabled lentivirus as a vector** to introduce a **new gene for hemoglobin into blood stem cells**.
- Casgevy utilizes the **CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool to disable the BCL11A gene**, which inhibits fetal hemoglobin production in blood stem cells.
- By disabling BCL11A, the therapy **enhances the production of foetal haemoglobin**, mitigating the effects of sickle cell disease or beta thalassemia.

Potential and Limitations

- Both gene therapies **use the patients' own blood cells for gene editing**, expanding the potential patient pool as they don't rely on bone marrow donors.
- However, the treatments are **likely to be expensive**, and only specialized hospitals equipped for the complex procedure will be able to administer them.

Safety Concerns

- There is a **need for ongoing monitoring of safety and efficacy** when using the CRISPR-Cas9 tool.
 - Due to the potential for unintended genetic modifications and associated side effects.
- **Clinical trials**, while showing promising results, were **conducted with a small number of patients and for a limited duration**, necessitating continuous real-world data evaluation.

Prelims Takeaway

- Casgevy
- Lyfgenia
- Sickle Cell Disease

India

GS III

8. Retail inflation rises to 5.55% in November - The Hindu

Relevance: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.**News:**

- Recently, **consumer prices in India surged to a three-month high** in November, registering a **5.55% increase** compared to October's 4.87%.
- This acceleration was primarily **driven by a notable spike in food price inflation**, reaching 8.7%, up from 6.6% in the previous month.
- **Rural areas experienced a higher inflation rate** at 5.85%, surpassing urban inflation, which stood at 5.3%.
- The **overall consumer price inflation** for November 2022 **reached 5.88%**, with the food price index witnessing a rise of 4.7%.

Prelims Takeaway

- Monetary Policy Committee
- Inflation Targeting
- Inflation

Inflation

- A **long-term increase** in the **general price level** of goods and services in a given economy.
- It considers the **pricing of most everyday or standard products and services**, such as food, clothes, housing, recreation, transportation, consumer staples, etc.
- It is **positive** when it helps **improve consumer demand** and **consumption**, and **operate economic growth**.
- Even inflation is meant to keep **deflation** in check and is a **drag** on the economy.

Inflation Targeting

- It is a **central banking policy** that focuses on **altering monetary policy to attain a set annual inflation rate**.
- It is founded on the assumption that **preserving price stability**, which is achieved by managing inflation, is the greatest way to **generate long-term economic growth**.
- Under the RBI Act, 1934, the **Central Government, in consultation with the RBI**, determines the **inflation target** in terms of the **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**, **once in five years**.
- It provides for the constitution of a **six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** to determine the **policy rate required to achieve the inflation target**.
- Currently, the RBI aims to **keep inflation at 4%** but will tolerate inflation between the **range of 2% to 6%**.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- Under **Section 45ZB of RBI Act, 1934**, the central government is empowered to constitute a **six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)**.
- **Objective:** To determine the Policy Rate required to achieve the inflation target
- The decision of the Monetary Policy Committee shall be **binding on the Bank**.
- **Composition:** The MPC shall consist of **6 members** viz.
 - RBI Governor as its ex-officio chairperson
 - Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy
 - An officer of the Bank to be nominated by the Central Board
 - Three persons to be appointed by the Central Government
 - They must be persons of ability, integrity and standing, having knowledge and experience in the field of economics or banking or finance or monetary policy.

9. Modi kicks off global AI summit - The Hindu

Relevance: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

News:

- The **Global Partnership for Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit** recently began in New Delhi, featuring **discussions on AI safety and development challenges**.
- The Prime Minister emphasized that **trust in AI hinges on addressing ethical, economic and social aspects**.

Prelims Takeaway

- Global Partnership for Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit
- Artificial Intelligence

Global Partnership for Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit

- It is a **multi-stakeholder** initiative focusing on **AI research and practical applications**.
- **Objective:** To bridge the gap between theory and practice on AI by supporting cutting-edge research and applied activities on AI-related priorities.
- The summit **involves participation from 29 countries** across North and South America, Europe, and Asia.
 - Notably, China is not a member.

- **India will lead the grouping** as the chair in 2024.

Focus Areas

- Panel discussions covered crucial issues, including **data sharing, cross-border data flows and ownership**.
- The discussions aim to **foster international collaboration** on AI-related issues.
- Paytm CEO stressed the **role of AI in transforming farming practices** and **addressing ecological concerns**.
- The Indian government is actively considering these matters to **rebalance power dynamics in data ownership**.

Prime Minister's Concerns and Proposals

- The PM **raised pertinent questions**, including
 - The establishment of an institutional mechanism for resilient employment in the AI era
 - The need for a standardized global AI education curriculum.
- He also addressed the **potential misuse of AI in creating deepfake content**.
- He stressed the importance of transparency, suggesting the **use of watermarking for AI-generated products**.

Security and Transparency in AI

- He highlighted concerns about **terrorists accessing AI tools**, increasing cybersecurity threats and potential data theft incidents.
- He called for **visibility into the algorithms behind AI models**, emphasising the transformative nature of AI while urging for transparency in its deployment.

10. Base effects boosted IIP growth to 11.7% in October - The Hindu/ Food prices drive November inflation to 3-month high; Oct IIP at 16-month peak - Indian Express

Relevance: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

News:

- In October, **India's factory output** exhibited a significant rebound, recording a **growth rate of 11.7%, marking a 16-month high**.
- This positive development **follows a slight setback in September** when the growth rate had dipped to 5.8%.

Prelims Takeaway

- Index of Industrial Production
- Eight core sectors

Not so rosy

IIP growth witnessed a bounce in October but many segments experienced slow to no growth from September

- 19 of 23 manufacturing sectors grew in Oct. and four of six segments on end-use basis saw double-digit growth
- Capital goods and consumer durables logged strong growth but after a sizeable contraction in the year earlier
- Consumer durables and non-durables lagged their 2021 levels when the festive season had a similar onset



Index of Industrial Production

- IIP is an indicator that measures the changes in the **volume of production of industrial products** during a given period.
- It is a **composite indicator** that measures the **growth rate of industry groups**.
 - The industry groups that it measures are **classified** as
 - Broad sectors like manufacturing, mining, and electricity.
 - Use-based sectors like capital goods, basic goods, intermediate goods, infrastructure goods, consumer durables, and consumer non-durables.
- It is used by **government agencies** including the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, etc, **for policy-making purposes**.
- It is compiled and published **monthly** by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- Base Year for IIP is **2011-2012**.

Eight Core Sectors

- These comprise **40.27%** of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- The eight core sector industries in **decreasing** order of their weightage: **Refinery Products > Electricity > Steel > Coal > Crude Oil > Natural Gas > Cement > Fertilisers**.



Mentorship
India

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. Understanding the debates around anarcho-capitalism - The Hindu

Relevance: Economy

Context:

- Anarcho-capitalism is a political philosophy **advocating for the abolition of the state** and the **privatization of law and order** through a free-market system.
- The term is coined by **libertarian economist Murray Rothbard**.
- However, it gained **recent attention with Javier Milei**, self-identified as an anarcho-capitalist, **winning the Argentine presidential race**.

Functioning of Anarcho-Capitalism

- Traditionally, free-market proponents endorsed private provision for most goods and services, except for policing and courts, assumed to be the state's domain.
- Anarcho-capitalists challenge this notion, asserting that private companies in a free market can deliver superior policing and legal services.
 - Similar to how they offer better products and services than the government.

Key Features of Anarcho-Capitalism

- In an anarcho-capitalist society, individuals will pay private police and courts for protection and dispute resolution.
- Private companies, which depend on customer patronage for their survival, would effectively serve the needs of their customers.
- The competition would ensure that the quality of police and legal services is high and prices low.
- This contrasts with the state's police and court system, funded by taxpayers, often criticised for inefficiencies and low quality.

Critics' Concerns

- Critics contend that providing police and judiciary services through multiple firms within one region could lead to conflict and chaos.
- They also argue that a market-driven system would favour the rich, allowing them to escape justice by paying more.

Anarcho-capitalists Response

- Anarcho-capitalists counter these claims, asserting that competing private entities would cooperate based on pre-approved rules to avoid conflicts.
- They also argue that private firms, reliant on broader societal patronage, would not favour the rich to avoid losing business from the majority of the population.

Potential for Justice and Market Dynamics

- Anarcho-capitalists maintain that, contrary to critics' views, anarcho-capitalism could provide better justice opportunities for the poor.
- Private firms, aiming to meet market demand, might focus on the bottom of the economic pyramid.
- This stands in contrast to the current system, where state-backed police and legal structures are influenced by lobbying and favours.

2. The go-to nation - Indian Express

Relevance: World Affairs

Context:

- Its a **pivotal diplomatic moment for India in 2023**, focusing on its G20 stewardship and the parallel with China's geoeconomic rise in 2008.
- With a **GDP comparable to China's in 2007**, India has the **potential to reshape the global order** through strategic diplomacy, echoing China's success during the global financial crisis.

China's Model and India's Opportunity

- Examining China's response to the 2008 crisis, it is emphasized that China leveraged economic promise to gain substantial influence.
- India, with a similar GDP, has an analogous opportunity to position itself as an "additional engine of growth" and geopolitical power in the changing global landscape.

India's Role Amid Global Changes

- As Europe faces stagnation, the US turns inward, and China grapples with internal issues, India can play a crucial role in driving global growth.
- India, with its \$4 trillion economy, can contribute to institutions, and enhance security.
- India's platform economy and potential for green and digital growth position it uniquely in the 2020s.

India's Additionality and Attributes

- The term "additionality" is emphasized, suggesting that India can offer significant contributions without being extraordinary.
- While China's growth had momentum, India has its trajectory, better suited for a digital and green future.
- There is a need for a coherent roadmap, echoing China's approach 15 years ago, to excite global partners.

India's Development Finance Role

- India's growing development finance capacity is identified as a key element of its additionality.
- India is envisioned as the "bank of the Global South" by allocating a substantial portion of its GDP to development cooperation.
- This financial strength, coupled with a unique proposition, can enhance India's global influence.

Outward-Focused Approach

- India should establish an outward-focused development finance corporation, akin to China's model, to catalyze global projects.
- India needs a bank that will focus on global corporate needs beyond just trade finance.
- And it also needs imagery that resonates with the international community.

Conclusion

- Similar to India's domestic initiative, Gati Shakti, we need an **external engagement approach**.
- India should **collaborate with like-minded partners** to map priority infrastructure, connectivity routes, business hubs, and developmental projects globally.
- 2024 is the year for inking a world map described by **India's vision for its role in the world**.

3. Going after touts: the change in Advocates Act - Indian Express

Relevance: Polity

Context:

- **The Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023**, aimed at **eliminating 'touts' from the legal system**, was passed in the Lok Sabha recently.

The Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023	The Advocates Act of 1961
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bill repeals the colonial-era Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, and amends the Advocates Act, 1961, with a focus on reducing unnecessary enactments in the legal framework. • By repealing the outdated Legal Practitioners Act, the Bill aims to streamline legal regulations and eliminate obsolete laws. <p>Significance and Rationale of the Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bill aligns with the government's policy of repealing obsolete laws and pre-independence Acts that have lost their utility. • The amendments aim to enhance the efficiency and transparency of the legal system by addressing the issue of touts. <p>Provisions of the Repealed 1879 Act</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The now-repealed Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, defined the term "legal practitioner" and introduced the concept of a "tout." • A tout was described as someone who procures clients for a legal practitioner in exchange for payment. • The definition also encompassed individuals frequenting various locations for client procurement. • The Advocates Act of 1961 replaced a significant portion of the 1879 Act, but certain provisions related to its extent, definitions, and powers regarding touts remained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was enacted to amend and consolidate laws related to legal practitioners, Bar Councils, and the All-India Bar. • It was a post-independence effort to streamline legal regulations, replacing three earlier Acts governing legal practitioners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ It included the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, the Bombay Pleaders Act, 1920, and the Indian Bar Councils Act, 1926. • The new Bill amends the 1961 Act, focusing on the insertion of a provision, Section 45A, to address the issue of touts. <p>Key Provisions of the Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The newly added Section 45A empowers High Courts and district judges to frame and publish lists of touts. • However, no person's name will be included in any such list until they have had an opportunity to show cause against such inclusion. • Further, any authority empowered to make lists of alleged or suspected touts can send them to any subordinate court. • Subordinate courts after holding an inquiry into the conduct of such persons, will allow them an opportunity to show cause. • After this, the lower court will report back to the authority ordering the inquiry. • If proven to be a tout, the person's name will be included in the list of touts that will be published by the authority and hung in every court. • The Bill also introduces penalties, including imprisonment and fines, for acting as a tout while included in the list.

Quick Look

1. Organ Transplant

- The process of organ transplantation in India involves organs sourced either from deceased persons, donated by their relatives, or from living donors, typically close relatives.
- For living donations, comprehensive documentation is necessary. Additional scrutiny is applied for altruistic donations from more distant relatives, in-laws, or long-time friends, ensuring no financial exchange is involved.
- Engaging in organ trade, including offering to pay for organs, advertising for such arrangements, seeking individuals to supply organs for payment, and involvement in fraudulent documentation, is met with severe legal consequences.
- Offenders may face imprisonment for up to 10 years and fines of up to Rs 1 crore.
- The Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994 governs these procedures and outlines regulations to ensure ethical and legal practices.

2. Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary

- The first-of-its-kind, Nature Interpretation Centre at the Eastern Ghats Biodiversity Centre along the periphery of the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary was inaugurated.
- Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
- It is named after the local hillock "Kambalakonda" acting as a green lung for citizens of Vizianagaram, is this large and sprawling sanctuary.
- Topography: It is considerably hilly with steep slopes.
- It hosts dry evergreen forests, a highly-threatened and unique forest type seen only in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in India.
- One of the most stunning flowers found in the region includes the Indian screw tree.
- Other flowers and fruits like flowers of the Bush plum tree, Jungle berry bunches can be found all across the landscape.
- Fauna: Mammals like Leopard, Barking Deer, Jackal and Avifauna include Paradise flycatcher, Tree pie, Quails, Partridges, etc.

3. Exercise VINBAX 2023

- Recently, the Indian Armed Forces contingent reached Hanoi, Vietnam to take part in the Joint Military Exercise VINBAX 2023.
- VINBAX was instituted in 2018 and the first edition was conducted at Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.
- It is an annual training event conducted alternatively in India and Vietnam.
- This year's exercise will be conducted at Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Objective: To foster collaborative partnership, promote inter-operability and share best practices between the two sides under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter on Peacekeeping Operations.
- The exercise will be conducted as a Command Post Exercise cum Field Training Exercise with focus on deployment and employment of an Engineer Company and a Medical Team.

4. Red Sprite

- Recently, the European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut photographed an uncommon occurrence termed a red sprite.
- A red sprite represents an extraordinary meteorological phenomenon categorised as a Transient Luminous Event (TLE).
- Occasionally dubbed red lightning, it occurs above thunderclouds at altitudes between 40 and 80 kms above the Earth's surface.
- Lightning flashes normally go downward from the clouds to the ground.
- However, a sprite goes in the other direction, going into the atmosphere, a bit like backwards lightning.

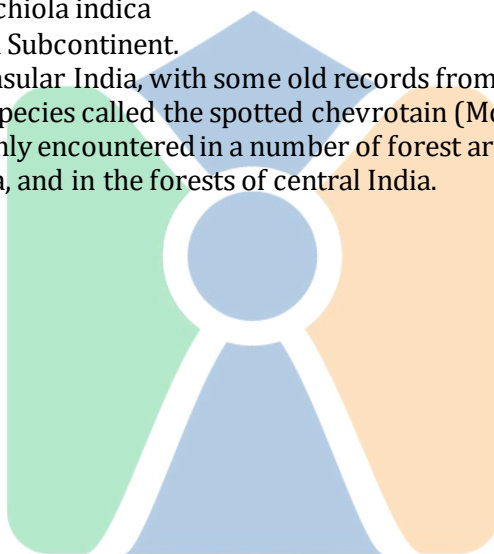
- It happens incredibly quickly, in about a millisecond, which can make it tricky for scientists to capture and observe them.
- Also, as the red sprites form above thunder clouds, they are not easily studied from Earth and are mostly seen from space.

5. Otolith rings

- The otolith is a stony lump in the fish ear.
- These are much like tree rings which reveal fish's age.
- Different forms or isotopes of oxygen in the otolith indicate the temperature the fish experienced when it was alive. Carbon isotopes reveal how quickly food was converted into energy.
- Fish carry their fitness trackers in their ears. They are commonly known as "earstones," are hard, calcium carbonate structures located directly behind the brain of bony fishes.

6. Indian Mouse Deer

- The Indian Mouse Deer or Spotted Chevrotain is the smallest deer in India and is highly nocturnal.
- Its Scientific Name is *Moschiola indica*
- It is endemic to the Indian Subcontinent.
- It is mainly found in peninsular India, with some old records from Nepal.
- Sri Lanka has a separate species called the spotted chevrotain (*Moschiola meminna*).
- Within India, it is commonly encountered in a number of forest areas along the Western Ghats, in the Eastern Ghats up to Orissa, and in the forests of central India.



Mentorship
India

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Article 370 of the Indian Constitution

1. Article 370 granted special autonomous status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. The President of India has the power to amend or abrogate Article 370 through a constitutional amendment.
3. Article 370 was included in the Constitution of India from its inception in 1950.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Election Commission of India

1. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs) are appointed by the President of India and can be removed only through impeachment by Parliament.
2. The term of the Chief Election Commissioner is six years or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier.
3. The Election Commission of India conducts elections for the offices of the President and Vice President of India.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

1. MGNREGS guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

2. The scheme is applicable in all rural areas across India, excluding the Union Territories.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

1. FAO is a specialised agency of the United Nations aimed at achieving food security and reducing hunger by providing technical assistance and conducting research in the field of agriculture.
2. FAO operates as an autonomous entity and is not affiliated with any international organisation or government.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

1. GCC is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
2. The headquarters of the GCC is located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q6. With reference to Pompe disease, consider the following statements

1. It is a rare inherited disorder that affects one child per million.
2. It is caused by the mutation of the GAA gene that causes the production of alpha-glucosidase.
3. The treatment of Pompe Disease includes Enzyme Replacement Therapy (ERT).

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q7. Consider the following statements with reference to gene therapies, Casgevy and Lyfgenia

1. Lyfgenia utilizes the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool to disable the BCL11A gene, which inhibits fetal hemoglobin production in blood stem cells.
2. Casgevy rely on the donor's bone marrow for gene editing and the treatment is likely to be expensive.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q8. Consider the following statements with reference to Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

1. It is an indicator that measures the changes in the volume of production of industrial products during a given period.
2. It is compiled and published annually by the National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
3. The Eight Core Sectors comprise 55% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Q9. Which of the following statements most aptly describe anarcho-capitalism?

- A. It promotes the establishment of a powerful state to regulate all economic activities and social interactions.
- B. It emphasizes a centralized government to ensure equal distribution of resources among citizens.
- C. It supports a planned economy where the government dictates production and consumption patterns.
- D. It advocates for the abolition of the state, proposing that private entities in a free market should handle law and order.

Q10. Consider the following statements

1. The term 'tout,' refers to any individual who frequents civil or criminal courts for the purpose of legal business procurement.
2. The Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023 aims to introduce a comprehensive framework to regulate the activities of touts in the legal profession.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Prelims Track Answer

Ans. 1 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Article 370 provided special autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It allowed the state to have its own constitution and decision-making powers except in matters of defence, communications, and foreign affairs. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The power to amend or abrogate Article 370 rested with the concurrence of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. The President could not unilaterally make changes to Article 370 without the state's agreement. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Article 370 was a temporary provision included in the Constitution of India. It was not present from the inception but was added later to recognize the special circumstances of Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Ans. 2 Option A is correct

Explanation

- The Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners are appointed by the President of India. However, they can be removed by the President, and not through impeachment by Parliament. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Chief Election Commissioner does not have a fixed term of six years. The CEC and ECs hold office during the pleasure of the President, which means they can be removed at any time. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The Election Commission of India conducts elections to the offices of the President and Vice President of India, but it does not directly conduct these elections. The President and Vice President are elected by an electoral college consisting of elected members of both houses of Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies of States. **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**

Ans. 3 Option B is correct

Explanation

- MGNREGS guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. This provision ensures a social safety net for rural households and promotes inclusive growth. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- MGNREGS is applicable in all rural areas across India, including the Union Territories. It covers all the districts in the country, providing employment opportunities and addressing rural unemployment. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**

Ans. 4 Option A is correct

Explanation

- FAO is a specialised agency of the United Nations that focuses on international efforts to achieve food security and reduce hunger. It provides technical assistance, conducts research, and collaborates with member countries to address issues related to agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**
- FAO operates as a specialised agency of the United Nations and is affiliated with the UN. It works closely with other international organisations, governments, and non-governmental organisations to address global food and agriculture challenges. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect**

Ans. 5 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is indeed a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It was established to promote economic, political, and security cooperation among its member states. **Hence, statement 1 is correct**

- The headquarters of the GCC is located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It serves as the central hub for coordinating the activities and initiatives of the member countries.

Hence, statement 2 is correct

Ans. 6 Option C is correct

Explanation

Pompe Disease

- Also known as Glycogen Storage Disease Type II, Pompe disease is a rare genetic disorder that affects one child per million. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It results from a deficiency of the enzyme acid alpha-glucosidase (GAA). **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The enzyme is essential for breaking down glycogen into glucose within cell lysosomes.
- The severity and onset of Pompe disease symptoms vary, leading to a spectrum of clinical presentations.
- Key symptoms include progressive muscle weakness affecting mobility, motor skill delays in children, degenerative impacts on bones, respiratory complications etc.
- Enzyme tests on blood or skin cells, along with genetic analysis, help accurately identify and confirm the disease, facilitating timely intervention.
- Although there is no cure for Pompe disease, Enzyme Replacement Therapy (ERT) is a standard treatment. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

Ans. 7 Option D is correct

Explanation

- The US FDA recently granted approval for two gene therapies, Casgevy and Lyfgenia, to treat sickle cell disease in patients aged 12 and above.
- Lyfgenia employs a disabled lentivirus as a vector to introduce a new gene for hemoglobin into blood stem cells. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Casgevy utilizes the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool to disable the BCL11A gene, which inhibits fetal hemoglobin production in blood stem cells.

- By disabling BCL11A, the therapy enhances the production of foetal haemoglobin, mitigating the effects of sickle cell disease or beta thalassemia.
- Both gene therapies use the patients' own blood cells for gene editing, expanding the potential patient pool as they don't rely on bone marrow donors. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- However, the treatments are likely to be expensive, and only specialized hospitals equipped for the complex procedure will be able to administer them.

Ans. 8 Option A is correct

Explanation

- Index of Industrial Production is an indicator that measures the changes in the volume of production of industrial products during a given period. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- It is a composite indicator that measures the growth rate of industry groups.
- It is used by government agencies including the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, etc, for policy-making purposes.
- It is compiled and published monthly by the National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. **Hence, statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Base Year for IIP is 2011-2012.
- The Eight Core Sectors comprise 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). **Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.**
- The eight core sector industries in decreasing order of their weightage: Refinery Products> Electricity> Steel> Coal> Crude Oil> Natural Gas> Cement> Fertilisers.

Ans. 9 Option D is correct

Explanation

- Anarcho-capitalism is a political philosophy advocating for the abolition of the state and the privatization of law and order through a free-market system. **Hence, option D is correct.**

- The term is coined by libertarian economist Murray Rothbard.
- However, it gained recent attention with Javier Milei, self-identified as an anarcho-capitalist, winning the Argentine presidential race.
- Anarcho-capitalists assert that private companies in a free market can deliver superior policing and legal services.
- In an anarcho-capitalist society, individuals will pay private police and courts for protection and dispute resolution.
- The definition also encompassed individuals frequenting various locations for client procurement. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023 amends the 1961 Act, focusing on the insertion of a provision, Section 45A, to address the issue of touts.
- The newly added Section 45A empowers High Courts and district judges to frame and publish lists of touts. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

Ans. 10 Option C is correct

Explanation

- The now-repealed Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, defined the term "tout" as someone who procures clients for a legal practitioner in exchange for payment.
- However, no person's name will be included in any such list until they have had an opportunity to show cause against such inclusion.
- The Bill also introduces penalties, including imprisonment and fines, for acting as a tout while included in the list.

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